

# THE STOKE POGES SCHOOL

## Attendance Policy

<b>Governors Committee Responsible for the Policy</b>	Finance, Personnel and Resources Committee
<b>Date Approved</b>	September 2020
<b>Recommended Review Period</b>	Biennial
<b>Date of Next Review</b>	September 2022
<b>Person Responsible for the Policy</b>	Headteacher

### Introduction

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

At The Stoke Poges School, we believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

At least 95% attendance is the nationally expected level for children at primary school. Parents should be aware that if their child misses a significant amount of time at school this will have a negative impact on their progress.

We value all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, behaviour and teaching and learning. This policy takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

### Overall Aims

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected
- To ensure the school attendance target is achieved, through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality
- To raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full educational potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality
- To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication, about the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust rigorous system for analysing attendance
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them
- To work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them

### Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Amendments for the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 came into force on 1 September 2013. For primary schools these amendments referred to term time holiday and education penalty notices.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Stoke Poges School believes that attendance is primarily the responsibility of parents/carers. However, improved school attendance can best be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

#### Headteacher

- To be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the policy
- To deal with parental requests for extended leave in line with LA policies and procedures
- To consider the use of Penalty Notices, in line with LA policies and procedures

#### Inclusion Manager

- To lead on/take responsibility for attendance/punctuality, on a day-to-day basis, including liaising with/responding to parental enquires
- To oversee the analysis of/analyse half termly/termly/yearly data and respond to findings
- To meet with the school administrator to monitor the systems and structures, ensuring they are having an impact on pupil attendance and punctuality
- To liaise with external agencies such as the Education Welfare Officer and make referrals where necessary
- To ensure that rewards and incentives for attendance and punctuality are being used
- Work with the teachers, to plan for the reintegration of pupils after long-term absence
- To revise and amend the policy, as required

#### Attendance Manager

- To carry out and record the outcome of first day calls when a child doesn't arrive at school when no reason has been received
- To monitor weekly attendance data
- To check the school answer phone and take messages from parents/carers about pupil absence
- To promptly inform the DHT if there are any concerns relating to attendance/punctuality
- To produce half termly/termly/yearly data for the SLT to analyse
- To record reasons for absence and update class registers
- To implement the daily checking of registers after the morning and afternoon registration sessions
- To report to the LA, as requested
- To maintain clear communication with the SLT regarding attendance and punctuality
- To oversee the admission and induction of new pupils
- To support the DHT with the promotion of good attendance and punctuality through incentives
- To ensure staff are following the registration systems and structures in this policy
- Inform parents of school procedures when parents have failed to inform the school

#### Staff

- To ensure quality first teaching every day, with lessons that are well planned and resourced so that they challenge, inspire and meet their learners' needs
- To take accurate records of pupil attendance
- Take a formal register twice a day at 8.55am and 1pm (FS / KS1) or 1.30pm (KS2)
- To regularly remind children and parents about the importance of good attendance
- To follow up on pupil absence by ensuring reasons for absence are sought
- Provide a welcoming and safe environment which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children

- Establish good and effective communication links with parents/carers and work collaboratively in meeting the child's needs
- Work with pupils and their families where attendance is a concern, identifying barriers to good attendance and working to overcome these
- To promptly inform the DHT of pupils who persist with poor attendance
- To feed back to parents about pupil attendance and punctuality regularly and at Parents Evenings

### Parents

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually.

We request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, send a written leave request to the Head Teacher in advance of booking the holiday.

### **Categorising absence**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence by 9am and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

If the school is unclear as to why a child is absent by the close of the register a member of the office staff will telephone parents to seek an explanation. This will then be recorded and followed up.

Mrs Palmer will follow up on written notes to explain absences.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

**Illness:** In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

**Medical/Dental Appointments:** Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

Authorised absence – extra-curricular activities: Leave of absence permission is also required for further extra-curricular activities such as drama, sport, music etc. We support pupils in furthering these activities and understand that at times missing a short period from the school day is unavoidable, for example for music or dance exams. In these situations permission may be sought by sending a letter to the school explaining the nature and duration of absence required along with copy of the appointment letter. Parents should give as much notice as is practicable in these situations.

Where longer or more frequent absence is requested, such as a run of work in a professional theatre, this must go through the same process as for exceptional leave of absence. The school must balance the opportunity this may provide against the effect on the child's education. Each request will be reviewed on an individual basis according to circumstances.

Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will plan for work to be sent home.

Late Arrival: Registration begins at **8.50am**. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. The register will close at **9.15am**. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as absent. This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. A parent/carer must sign the late book.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry.

Unauthorised absence: Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Exceptional Leave of Absence: The Headteacher may authorise a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances only. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

Exceptional circumstances may include:

- Grandparent of close relative is seriously ill and you must leave in an emergency
- Significant trauma in the family recently and a break will benefit the child – backed up by a doctor's letter
- A one –off, never to be repeated occasion that can only happen at that time, e.g. wedding/funeral

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a written request to the head teacher before arrangements are made. [Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request.](#) Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request has been granted, the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice.

Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 will not be granted permission to take holidays during SATs (Standard Assessment Tasks and Tests), nor during the time leading up to these assessments. These occur in the first 2 weeks of May.

Appeals against the Headteacher's decision will be referred to the Chair of Governors.

Religious Observance: Stoke Poges School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R)

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

Collection After School: Teachers will keep children with them at their collection point for ten minutes at the end of the school day. After this time children are brought to the school office. If a child is collected late three times during a six week block (10%), school will contact the parent/carer to request an appointment.

Traveller Absence: The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

The Stoke Poges School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at Stoke Poges School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

The Stoke Poges School can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and

- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

The school will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

### **Deletions from the Register**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

The Stoke Poges School will follow Buckinghamshire Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

### **Using Attendance Data**

All pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

Every [half term](#) the Attendance Administrator will provide the Inclusion Manager with attendance data. Phase Leaders will receive a complete set of data for their year groups.

This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

The school will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **Support Systems**

The Stoke Poges School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any

difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child’s attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

**Legal Sanctions**

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Stoke Poges School will notify the Buckinghamshire Education Welfare Service of the irregular attendance.

The Education Welfare Service or school may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

<b>Headteacher</b>		<b>Date</b>	
<b>Chair of Governing Board</b>		<b>Date</b>	

## APPENDIX 1

### Intervention Flow Chart

School will notify parent of the child's irregular school attendance and offer them the opportunity and support to improve.

If you receive a letter informing you of concerns regarding your child's attendance you should

- Speak with your child to see if there are any reasons why they are reluctant to attend
- Contact the school to discuss any difficulties you or your child may be experiencing.
  - Ensure your child attends school regularly

If there is no improvement and the parent has not provided a good reason for the absence, the school may refer to the Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service will invite you to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.

A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between you and the Local Authority aimed at supporting you in improving your child's school attendance.

Whilst your involvement in a Parenting Contract is voluntary, if you fail to engage with the support offered and your child's attendance remains irregular, the Education Welfare Service may issue a Penalty Notice or begin legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court.



